

12 Steps to Successful Advocacy

Step 1: Identify Your Cause.

- What do you want? Focus on the solution, not the complaint!
- Ask for it all, but be willing to compromise.
- See the big picture.
- Define the problem. What do you want fixed?
- Is there more than one solution?

Step 2: Do Your Homework.

- Know the issue – and put it into human terms.
- Gather facts and expert information.
- List the pros and cons of your solution.
- Form a response to the cons.
- Track legislation and learn the legislative process.

Step 3: Know Your Legislators.

- Visit the legislative website (www.legis.state.ia.us) or local library for help.
- Contact your county auditor, or your state/local election commissioner.
- Social media (most legislators have an online presence - Facebook, Twitter, website)

Step 4: Rally the Troops.

- Who else supports your cause (legislators, businesses, organizations)
- Enlist their support.
- Decide on common themes – so your messages resonate.
- Help your legislator understand why your position is important to his/her constituents.
- Fight where the legislator lives through grassroots at home.
- Be prepared to give the legislator information s/he can use.

Step 5: Build Support for Your Cause.

- Use the media.
- Strength in numbers – work as a group.
- Consider rallies and other public events to get out your message.

Step 6: Determine Who Can Help You.

- City Council/Mayor/County officials
- Businesses/Civic Organizations
- Child Welfare
- Legislators
- Lobbyists
- Media/News Editors
- Grasstops vs. Grassroots

“I never worry about action, only inaction.” *Sir Winston Churchill*

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Step 7: Communicate.

- Attend city council meetings.
- Make appointments with the person you selected in Step 6.
- Make telephone calls.
- Visit your State Capitol – and Lobby!
- Write letters or email.
- Invite your legislator to a community event or go to a fundraiser.

Step 8: What to Write/Say.

- State the problem.
- State the solution.
- Put the issue into context with a personal story.
- Ask for help.
- Say thank you!
- Follow up.

Step 9: Keep It Short & Simple.

- Be courteous and respectful.
- Be brief, concise, and to the point.
- Be informative and truthful.
- Be positive – always make your case without being critical of others.

Step 10: Support Those Who Support You.

- Join organizations sympathetic to your cause.
- Support candidates who support you.
- Remember – there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies.
- Do not take traditional friends for granted.
- Never write off a legislator just because of party affiliation.
- Don't make legislative enemies – you might need them in the future.

Step 11: Remember – It's Not Personal.

- Listen to your opponents with the same respect and attention you want.
- Try to understand their position.
- Keep channels of communication open.
- Seek compromise and be diplomatic.

Step 12: Don't Give Up – or Give In.

- Remember Rome wasn't built in a day.
- Be persistent and consistent.
- Aim for consensus rather than victory. Be willing to settle for making progress.
- Stay committed – you have a compelling, energizing reason to keep fighting until you accomplish your goal.